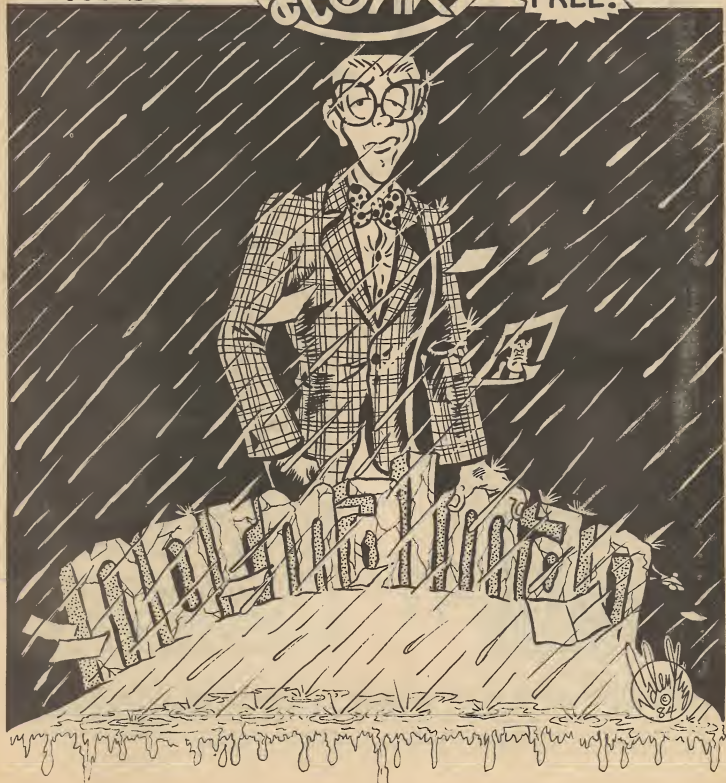


THE TELEGRAPH WIRE

ISSUE 13

COMICS
& CONIK

FREE!





(C) Norman Dog

Welcome, readers, to 1984--with the first FIT TO BE TIED logo of the new year by the ever-inventive and innovative Norman Dog, star of the most recent Loonies' meeting. Thanks, Mr. Dog! Norman's book, BAD HABITS, is still available--for a limited time only--for \$5 pp. from DDCO, c/o The East Bay Express, P.O. Box 3198, Berkeley, CA, 94703.

I had planned, originally, to devote this issue's editorial to exploding the Orwellian myths by welcoming in 1984 with open arms. I'd intended to smother you with a syrupy sort of optimism regarding life in general and the comic book business in particular. However, as I write, 1984 is already well underway and, true to Orwellian form, the new year has thus far been pretty frightening. Though Big Brother has yet to publicly rear his ominous head, he's nonetheless made his presence felt--at least so far as I'm concerned. Among other horror stories, I personally spent the first three weeks of '84 laid up with bronchitis--hardly a propitious beginning. On top of that, my very best friend in the world had his life and livelihood completely devastated within the first few days of the new year. And, not to mention (but I will anyway) that the most highly-touted comics project of 1984, Marvel's SECRET WARS, looks to be a total waste of time; the first issue was not only incredibly boring but loaded with inaccuracies--a sorry excuse, it seems, for yet another new line of toys. Is this just a sample of what's in store for us in the coming year?

Ironically enough, and despite George Orwell, I found myself in New York on New Year's Eve toasting in 1984 with great expectations. Boy, I sure got fooled!

Well, on the other hand, and not to rant on for too long as the voice of Doom & Gloom--hope does spring eternal and all that, LOVE AND ROCKETS and THE BADGER are thankfully still on the market, and just maybe--with luck--1984 will begin to look somewhat better in the months to come. Lord only knows, it can't get much worse!

THE CANADIAN EXPERIENCE...

[Or: Some Little-Known Facts About the Comic Book Biz in Canada--for Americans.]

Just prior to the onset of 1984, I flew to Montreal for a few days at Christmas. And was amazed at the growth of the comic retail trade in that city. When I was last there, in summer '81, Nova Bookshop was basically the only comics store in town--and Montreal's first. Owned and operated by Peter Black, Nova had then been in business for three years. That same summer, just before I left for California, a second comic shop opened up: Capitaine Québec. Returning this Christmas I discovered that, in the two and a half years since I'd last been in Montreal, eight new comic shops had come on to the local scene! Admittedly, a couple fizzled and died early on. But the number remaining is nonetheless significant. Especially so, considering that only 25% of Montreal's population is English-speaking! And, contrary to what I would have expected, the city's comic dealers do not stock any French comics--neither the TINTINS nor the abysmal black-and-white French translations of newsstand Marvels and DCs. The dealers do claim, however, that a certain portion of their clientele is francophone. Some Québécois customers are improving their English by reading (mostly American) comics. Uh, well, that's the claim.

Montreal retailers (and, I expect, Canadian retailers in general) are somewhat, shall we say, dismayed about the current double-pricing of comics. Not that they don't recognize the discrepancy between the Canadian and U.S. dollar, but some price hikes (\$1.50 U.S./\$2.00 Canadian) jump beyond the rate of exchange. Couple that with DC's across-the-

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board price increase last fall--not to mention the bane of comic retail in Canada: customs and shipping costs--and you wind up with a situation in which the odds against the comic retailer's success (and potential growth) are stacked high from the start. Somehow, though, Montreal retailers seem to be doing quite nicely thank you.

English-language comic shops are required, by the provincial government of Quebec, to have French names. Officially, Nova Bookshop is Librairie Nova, though Peter Black doesn't have one French-language book in his store. (A peculiar political reality of which most of the American comics industry is, I'd suspect, unaware.) Peter *did* have some old ('50s) romance comics stashed away for me--a real Christmas treat!

To quote a number of the local retailers, comic conventions in Montreal have so far been nothing more than a "glorified dealers' room." It's not clear whether Montreal's comic book population could, in fact, support a full-blown convention or whether there has simply been a lack of people with the initiative and the professionalism to properly promote, organize, and run a con. Certainly the annual Maplecon in Ottawa (only a two-hour drive from Montreal) demonstrates that there is room for successful conventions in eastern Canada.

In addition to conventions, Montreal fans also seem to be deprived of many of the in-store events that we enjoy here in the Bay Area. Guest signings are extremely few and far between. And I have yet to come across a Canadian store newsletter.

Oh yes, one more thing about the great land to the north: Canadians read AMERICAN FLAGG, THOR, and ALPHA FLIGHT.

The more things change...

In line with this burst of ethnicity, let me lay my current pet peeve on you. Look at the given names and/or secret identities of most of our superheroes: Peter Parker, Clark Kent, Sue Storm, Billy Batson, Bruce Banner, Helena Wayne, Dick Grayson. Notice a trend? Every name--and there are countless others--is quite properly and quite thoroughly Anglo-Saxon. And here I thought the U.S. was supposed to be the great melting-pot. Marvel does boast Walter Langkowski, ALPHA FLIGHT's Sasquatch--but then again, he's Canadian and so, "permissibly" foreign. It seems, generally, that unless the character's ethnic background is part and parcel of his/her heroic guise, s/he will invariably be christened with an Anglo-Saxon name--both first and last names at that! Some kind of coincidence, huh?

Anyway, I'm waiting for: Action Man, in his secret identity as Larry Ruggiero, ordinary printer, returns in the cold early hours of morning to his home in Levittown and encounters not one costumed super-creep along the way! (Okay, that's a little drastic--I mean: "Larry Ruggiero"???--but you get the idea.)

Perhaps 1984 is not too bleak after all. It has brought with it a few small success stories for some of our local artists. Mike Mignola is pencilling a series of 11-page VISION and SCARLET WITCH stories, which Armando Gil will ink. Smilin' Mike has also just completed pencils and inks on a 10-page Sub-Mariner story for MARVEL FANFARE.

With the departure of Butch Guice from MICRO-NAUTS, series inker Kelley Jones will be taking over the pencils on the book.

Arthur Adams is currently pencilling the second

issue of LONGSHOT, a five or six-issue mini-series, written by Ann Nocenti and starring a sexy alien who's a cross between David Bowie and Sting. The series is due to premiere sometime this summer.

Trina Robbins is negotiating with Marvel to write, pencil, and ink one of the new books in Marvel's upcoming line of kids' comics. Tentatively titled MICKI, the book will feature 17-year old Micki Collins, Millie the Model's niece!

Lois Buhalis is a new letterer on the local scene. After an apprenticeship with Tom Orzechowski, Lois has recently been made letterer on ARAK and ALL-STAR SQUADRON for DC, Pacific's ELRIC, and "The Masked Man" series in ECLIPSE MONTHLY.

It suddenly occurs to me that it's been one year since the current incarnation of THE TELEGRAPH WIRE came into being. As editor, I suppose I ought to do a yearly retrospective--but I'd rather not look back, other than to thank all of you for your support this past year.

And now it's 1984. Heralding in our second year of publication in this format, Tom Orzechowski has done a terrific job of redesigning the WIRE's logo. In addition to lettering some of the most popular comics on today's market (and helping out frantic editors-in-distress!), Tom's been designing a number of new logos for various Marvel titles--including THE AVENGERS, HERCULES, and the FUMETTI book, with the logo for the Kitty/Wolverine mini-series still to come.

This issue of the WIRE kicks off the new year with the spotlight on Valentino's *normal* man, Aardvark-Vanheim's latest offbeat contribution to the mainstream melange. Next issue is a special April Fool's/Easter issue, featuring a very strange interview with CUTEY BUNNY creator Joshua Quagmire and the mysterious Fatty Tubbins. Be forewarned! And beyond that...well, lots of possibilities that are already beginning to take shape. And, no doubt, lots of work for ye beleaguered editor!

Speaking of beleaguered (heh heh), Comics & Comix head honcho John Barrett was recently named "Retailer of the Month" by the folks at First Comics in the January 1984 issue of their monthly newsletter, THE FIRST EDITION. Way to go, J.B.!

Hey, it's 1984 in the U.S.A. With a postscript on the subject courtesy of Berke Breathed:



(C) The Washington Post Co.

ECCENTRIC EVOLUTIONS

by JOHN BARRETT
PUBLISHER

FOUR COLDR REFLECTIONS...

I just returned from Las Vegas (It was a working vacation, honest! I only gambled away 25¢!) where I attended Glenwood Distributors' customer appreciation conference--special thanks to Russ and Doris Ernst and crew. Marvel, DC, First, Eclipse, Star*Reach, Americomics, Dargaud, Fantagraphics, Comico, and Texas Comics were among those in attendance. These companies, when not hosting breakfast, lunch, or dinner meetings, made presentations of some of what we will be seeing from them in the coming year. A few bits and pieces:

MARVEL - SOLDMON KANE by Steve Carr looks nice. "Jerry Wilcox" is a pseudonym used by Barry Windsor Smith and he will be working on the MACHINE MAN mini-series! CLOAK AND DAGGER will be a monthly comic. Marvel has completed a deal with TSR to produce a role-playing game, miniatures, and five modules per year. Marvel will also be producing a bi-monthly DR. WHO comic. Watch for their t-shirt transfers, too.

ECLIPSE - The popular "Masked Man" strip will continue for at least one year as the main feature in ECLIPSE MONTHLY. Winterland will be producing a line of Eclipse t-shirts. There will be a three-issue Craig Russell mini-series, NIGHT MUSIC, out in late '84.

FANTAGRAPHICS - There will be an upcoming issue of NEMO devoted to Carl Barks. Another very promising title is DALGODA, by Jan Strnad and Dennis Fujitake with colors by Kenneth Smith, with a gorgeous back-up strip by Kevin Nowlan, "Grimwood's Daughter".

COMICO - Comico is producing color comics now! EVANGELINE by Judith Hunt is beautiful.

DC - DC will have a new toy line produced by Kenner. AMETHYST will graduate to a regular ongoing series. SAMURAI, SON OF DEATH by Hiroshi Hirata is an upcoming title in the DC graphic novel line.

FIRST - Chaykin will be taking a two-issue "vacation" (#13 and #14) from AMERICAN FLAGG! but will still do the writing and covers in order to minimize the disruption. There will be a Grimjack/Starslayer cross-over in issue #18 of the latter's title to prelude Grimjack's own upcoming comic. First is planning on producing a "Flagg" calendar for 1985 by Chaykin.

In the last issue of THE TELEGRAPH WIRE, I devoted my column to "prioritizing" your purchases in

these days of the comic explosion. I came out strongly against reprints and had reactions from the following sectors of our industry:

FELLOW RETAILERS: Over 35 questioned and every one against reprints.

PUBLISHERS: Three reported in, all supportive but offering certain qualifications. Be more sensible and sensitive to the "glut" on the market. Limit the reprints to a few high-quality issues only. Reprints such as THE SPIRIT and others that originally appeared in the '40s and '50s and are nearly non-existent today should be considered in a separate non-objectable category (I agree).

DISTRIBUTORS: All opposed to reprints.

CUSTOMERS: Most agreed with one vocal dissenter whose objection was that he couldn't afford the originals and didn't want to miss the opportunity to read these "classics." I sympathize, however I consider this a small sacrifice for the future health of our industry.

Reprints siphon off money needed to support ongoing new titles. They devalue original printings, thus leaving dealers and collectors "holding the bag" while their investments dwindle in equity. This effect makes comics a less attractive investment and discourages speculators and potential new customers alike. Speculators, who traditionally buy heavily on the early issues of new titles, are an important link in the survival of these infant titles. Since new titles are monitored closely on their initial sales, if deprived of the speculators who may account for 25% or more of the sales on a #1 issue, we can expect to see a higher incidence of new-title failures. Again, let me emphasize that, first and foremost, you should buy whatever you enjoy. If you can't afford to buy every comic published, you may wish to set up a personal "priority" system. My own system is: (1) ongoing regular titles, (2) maxi-series, (3) pre-Code reprints, (4) mini-series, and (5) post-Code reprints. This ranking is based on comics of relatively comparable quality.

December was Comics & Comix' biggest month ever (by a landslide) and it was because of you. We really appreciate your patronage and will continue to offer you the widest variety of material possible, best prices coupled with special sales, in-store guest appearances and other events. Have a great 1984--Comics & Comix will be watching!

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The first volume in this series, *Talons of Blood*, was easily the most beautiful graphic novel published in the United States last year. *The Eyes That Burned* is the exciting sequel to that premiere volume, with the same thrilling lush full-color art reproduction, making a painting of every panel, an event of every page!

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MAIN LINES

Compiled by Matthew Denn

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM

CEREBUS #59, #60, and #61 will contain what Aardvark-Vanaheim describes as a "change of pace for Cerebus fans": three issues full of short stories. The Dave Sim stories in #59 will include "Carroll E. King Reads," "Memoirs," "At the Club, One Afternoon," "First Impression," and "Rough Pope."

FLAMING CARROT, known as "Dave Sim's favourite comic superhero," will be a bi-monthly title from A-V. The first issue is scheduled for May of this year. A-V describes the series as "comics with a twist of da-da," and notes that it is only "the first in a series of projects planned with writer/artist Bob Burden."

ARCHIE

Hidden inside the new Rudy Nebres cover on BLUE RIBBON #8 is a reprinted story by artists Neal Adams and Dick Giordano and writer Gray Morrow. The book is scheduled to ship on February 21st, and should be in stores soon thereafter.

CAPITAL

The first meeting between Capital's two first superheroes, Nexus and The Badger, will occur in NEXUS #7. That issue will be on sale in April and will tie in with the current BADGER storyline at that time.

The meeting between the two characters is arranged by Ham the Weather Wizard, who exiles the Badger from the 20th century. In the publisher's description of the meeting, "The Badger wasn't too stable to begin with and his



The Badger meets Nexus and Judah Maccabee



(C) Matt Wagner



Comico's EVANGELINE

severe displacement hasn't done much to improve his disposition."

COMICO

Comico has published a short preview of its new book, EVANGELINE, in COMICO PRIMER #6. The book, featuring the work of Charles Dixon and Judith Hunt, should already be on sale at your local Comics & Comix.

Writer/artist Matt Wagner has completed the first issue of MAGE. MAGE #1 should be on sale shortly.

Aside from COMICO PRIMER #6, featuring "Evangeline" by Dixon and Hunt, "Gauntlet" by Neil Vokes and

Rich Rankin, "Holiday Out" by Michael Lail and Grass Green, and "Victor" by Andrew Murphy, other books due this month are EVANGELINE #1, AZ #3, and SKROG #2.

DC COMICS

Writer Robin Snyder has recently left Archie and is currently working on a few projects for DC. He and artist Ernie Colon will be producing a graphic novel for the company: THE MEDUSA CHAIN. Colon is expected to finish the art by the end of February. Snyder and Colon have worked together in the past on short stories and DC editorial pages. Snyder and LEGION artist Keith Giffen have also done a story together: "Death Waits 1000 Years," destined for G.I. COMBAT #267.

To commemorate SUPERMAN'S 40th anniversary, editor Julius Schwartz is seeking out a variety of popular artists to work on Elliot S! Maggin's story. SUPERMAN #400 will be on sale in July and already features confirmed art by Frank Miller and Joe Orlando and a cover by Howard Chaykin. Schwartz said that his reason for seeking out a "jam" effort was that

(C) Dixon and Hunt

(C) Capital Pubs.



Eclipse's CROSSFIRE

(C) Evanier/Maugniot and Spiegale



(C) Sternad and Fujitake



(C) Sternad and Howland

"We plan to use the anniversary format for a number of artists to give a number of interpretations of who this almost mythical character is." All six chapters of the book will be drawn by different artists: Mike Kaluta, Frank Miller, Joe Orlando, Marshall Rogers, Jim Steranko, and Al Williamson.

Len Wein and Marv Wolfman have expanded their plans to chronicle the history of the DC universe. They now plan to release two different series: THE HISTORY OF THE DC UNIVERSE in winter of '85 and THE DC DIRECTORY in summer of '84. THE DC DIRECTORY will contain an encyclopedic listing of all major characters, places, and things in the DC universe; it will be written by Wein, Wolfman, and Peter Sanderson.

THE HISTORY OF THE DC UNIVERSE will continue as planned: a 32-page Mando book, scheduled for twelve issues.

DC has cancelled Keith Giffen's CREEPER mini-series. "After working on CREEPER for several months," said Giffen, "I've come up with so many new and different ideas that I might as well spend some more time with them and develop an entirely new series."

Comic book writer Elliot St. Magginn plans to run for New Hampshire's 2nd District seat in the United States House of Representatives next year. Magginn, stating that the country needs more progressive leadership, plans to run on a platform of improvements in education and the environment.

Dick Giordano has announced several new projects that DC will be pursuing in 1984, including:

A NEW GODS mini-series, which will feature five issues of reprint material and a sixth issue of all new material by Jack Kirby.

THE HUNGER DOGS: a graphic novel by Jack Kirby scheduled

for late summer.

FIRESTORM, a graphic novel by Gerry Conway and Pat Broderick, scheduled for the spring.

Ernie Colon's MU-109, his first graphic novel which is scheduled for summer.

DC's first Japanese graphic novel, tentatively titled SAMURAI, SON OF DEATH, by Sharmar DiVono and Hiroshi Hirata.

JONNI THUNDER, a female detective series written by Roy Thomas and drawn by Giordano, scheduled for summer release.

Finally, an unidentified secret project for Brian Bolland intended for late 1984 or early 1985.

Gene Colan, late of NATHANIEL DUSK, and Robert Loren Fleming, late of THRILLER, are collaborating on a new mini-series tentatively entitled UNDERWORLD.

No details have been released yet.

The new writer/artist team on THRILLER is Bill DuBay and Alex Nino. Their first project is a 48-page issue revealing the origins of the Seven Seconds. This story will appear in THRILLER #10.

Jericho, the newest member of the Teen Titans, will be a mute and will be given few, if any, thought balloons. Jericho's premiere will be in TALES OF THE TEEN TITANS #44. Jericho's super-power will be the ability to take over other humans' bodies, but he will not be able to speak through them unless they are unconscious when he possesses them.

In its December 12th press release, DC has reprinted a survey from THE COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE which shows that Marvel publishes more superhero books and more reprints than DC.

DC reports that the survey found that while little more than half of DC's titles were superhero books, Marvel's non-



(C) Marvel Comics Group

Arthur Adams' LONGSHOT: a cross between Sting and David Bowie



NEW MUTANTS à la Bill Sienkiewicz



reprint line consisted of 60% superhero books. Furthermore, said DC, "...an astonishing 21% of Marvel's titles surveyed by Mr. (David) Easter were reprints. Only 5% of DC's titles were deluxe format reprints."

Former COMICS SCENE editor Bob Greenberger has joined the DC staff in an unspecified editorial capacity. Hi, Bob.

ECLIPSE

Eclipse's new title in April will be CROSSFIRE, a spin-off book from DNAGENTS. CROSSFIRE will be written by Mark Evanier and drawn by Dan Spiggle. "CROSSFIRE," according to Eclipse, "is set in the colorful TV and movie business and the book will provide a real-life look at that industry as chronicled by a writer who is in the middle of it all."

FANTAGRAPHICS

Fantagraphics is planning to release its first four-color comic this year: DALGODA by Jan Strnad and Dennis Fujitake. DALGODA will debut with a 48-page special issue, with subsequent issues measuring 32 pages. Furthermore, a back-up series by Strnad and Kevin Nowlan, entitled "Grimwood's Daughter", will debut in ish #2.

FIRST COMICS

With GRIMJACK receiving its own series, "Black Flame" will take its place as back-up feature in STARSLAYER. Also, a three-issue special back-up series is scheduled for the feature in MARS #10-12.

And get ready for Joe Staton's ELFQUEST parody, "Smeltquest", premiering in E-MAN #17!

MARVEL

Bill Sienkiewicz is the new artist on NEW MUTANTS, beginning with issue #18. His gorgeous pencils and inks speak for themselves. Take a look.

After pencilling and inking this year's NEW MUTANTS ANNUAL, Bob McLeod will become the regular penciller on STAR WARS. Tom Palmer will stay on as inker.

X-MEN #186 will feature a special fill-in pencil job by comics legend Barry Windsor-Smith. The story, featuring Storm, will be inked by former X-MEN inker Terry Austin.

X-MEN ANNUAL #8 will be pencilled and inked by Bay Area superstar Steve Lialoha.

Bob Schreck guest stars in HERCULES #3, currently on sale. Who is Bob Schreck? Beats me. (My editor made me print this.)

PACIFIC

Pacific Comics will be distributing the new offering from Continuity Studios: ECHO OF FUTURE PAST. Neal Adams, the publisher of ECHO, claims that it will appear on a bi-monthly basis and will feature anthology stories.

Planned for the first issue is "Mudwogs" by Arthur Suydam, "Tippie Toe Jones" by Lindley Farley, Louis Mitchell, and Adams, "Bucky O'Hare" by Larry Hama and Michael Golden, "Frankenstein/Wolfman/Dracula" by Adams, and "Virus" by Jean Teule. The first issue is scheduled to ship in April.



Mike Mignola's Sub-Mariner for MARVEL FANFARE

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**THE ULTIMATE 12 ISSUE LIMITED SERIES
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There are two books that I read recently that really excited me. First was Tim Powers' *THE ANUBIS GATES* (Ace, \$2.95). This, like Brin's *STARTIDE RISING* (reviewed last time), is a book in which so much happens that it is impossible to synopsise the book. A Coleridge scholar gets flown to England to travel back in time through a mysterious time gate and travel comment to a group of rich aficionados on a speech Coleridge makes at an inn. He gets stranded there, finds there are other people from our time, and gets caught in some of the strangest plot twists I've ever seen. As in his earlier book, *THE DRAWING OF THE DARK*, Powers manages to keep you guessing as to exactly what is going on through several levels of plot convolution: every time you think you know what will happen, something unexpected but totally consistent happens. Powers seems to produce books slowly—I hope he lives a long time as I want to read more of his writing. (I even intend to find the two books he produced for Laser Books, SF's short-lived equivalent of Harlequin Romances.)

The other book was George R.R. Martin's *THE ARMAGEDDON RAG* (Poseidon Press, \$15.95). I did not expect to like it: the reviews and the advance publicity said it was about the sixties, and as one of the relatively few remaining longhairs, I expected it to be a bit simplistic. It isn't. Martin has written a book which takes the ambivalence of the sixties as seen through the eyes of the eighties, ties in a riveting thriller-style plot, and in the end deals with Good and Evil in a believable way. If you are not familiar with the music of the sixties, you may not understand some of the motivations of the characters. Martin choreographed this book to a set of songs which are now oldies, and integrated the music of a mythical group, The Nazgul: the story is about the attempt to bring The Nazgul back, ten years after their lead singer and guiding genius was shot while singing at West Mesa. The book seduced me: by the last 50 pages, I hardly knew where I was. If you remember the sixties with love, you want to read this book. If not, you should try it anyway; I expect you'll be caught by its pacing and its characters.

The Tempo division of Ace Books has a new line of mass market paperbacks called MagicQuest. These are being edited by Terri Windling. The focus of this line is children's fantasy, and for their first four offerings they have a very diverse selection. The first book, Patricia A. McKillip's *THE THROME OF THE ERRILL OF SHERILL* (Ace, \$2.25), was a slim (69 pages) hardback from Atheneum in 1973, and unclassifiable even then. It's still hard to know what to say about this book: every standard fantasy word is replaced by a word compounded of several others, and

the whole storyline never quite does what you expect. I found it one of the most enjoyable fantasy pieces I've read, and I'm very pleased to see it in paperback. The other half of this book is a story from the anthology *ELSEWHERE II*, "The Harrowing of the Dragon of Hoarsbreath." This story ranks with Joan Aiken's "A Harp of Fishbones," Elizabeth A. Lynn's "The Woman Who Loved the Moon," and Ursula K. LeGuin's "The Rule of Names" as a fine fantasy short story. I would recommend this book to anyone who likes pure fantasy.

The second book on their list is Elizabeth Marie Pope's *THE PERILOUS GARD* (Ace, \$2.25), another winner. Pope is a professor at Mills College in Oakland, and it shows occasionally: this book is at times didactic. The storyline is clear, the characters are quite believable, and the society is well-drawn. The banishment of Katherine Sutton to the north of England, her finding of the last fairy mound, and her reliving of the ballad of Tam Lin all make sense in the context of that society. This is a rare quality in fantasy, and the book is well worth reading for that alone.

I can't really say the same for the third book, Paul Fisher's *THE ASH STAFF* (Ace, \$2.25). I read this one as an Atheneum hardcover, too, and I thought it was an uninspired rehash of what Lloyd Alexander was doing in the Prydain series. What is interesting in this series shows up in the later volumes. I may be being a bit harsher than the book deserves: the author was about 17 when it was published.

The fourth book is difficult for me to review. I like Peter Dickinson's novels a great deal, and I enjoyed *TULKU* (Ace, \$2.25). It's hard for me to know whether someone who is not attuned to the subtleties of his writing will like it. Dickinson writes books with very different protagonists and very odd situations. The protagonist here is a young son of a missionary who has been killed, who meets a travelling Englishwoman and gets caught up in the education of the new lama in a Tibetan monastery. The book has a very measured pace, and I couldn't put it down, but I don't know how much of that was my confidence that Dickinson would produce a good story. Try this book: if you don't like it, read *KING AND JOKER* (Pantheon, \$2.95) and try again. I couldn't read Dickinson until I read that, and now I've read all his books.

For those of you who look at book spines, the reason the MagicQuest books are numbered 1, 2, 4, and 5 is that the book intended to be #3 has been delayed because the rights did not get cleared. The book will be published: it's Nicholas Stuart Gray's *THE SEVENTH SWAN*, and I hope they hurry because I want to read it!

The BRAD STRONG STORY

BY DIANA SCHUTZ

This really should have been Cat Yronwode's story, but for a number of reasons she was unable to print it. In any case, it's a story that deserves telling and I'm pleased to write it up for her. Here's what happened:

At last summer's Fantasy Fair in Houston, Texas, Cat invited several of the convention's guests to participate in her BUYER'S GUIDE column--which was written on the spot and printed in the August 26, 1983 issue of CBG: perhaps the most hilarious "Fit to Print" to ever see the light of day. Among the contributors was DC writer Marv Wolfman, whose guest spot is reprinted below:

AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT: Hi, this is Marv Wolfman subbing for Cat Yronwode. It's real strange doing this because this is pretty much how I began --doing commentary work for fanzines--one in particular called "What Th--?", that I mailed out free of charge to anyone who wanted it--I never was a very good businessman.

Anyway, as long as I have Cat's space, let me say something that I've always wanted to tell people but never got around to. Wolfman is not my real name. It's a made-up name. Marv isn't my real name either but I thought Marv Wolfman had a certain ring to it that would make me sound like a writer. My real name is Brad Strong. In real life I'm six foot eight, solid muscle and gorgeous as hell, but since I've got to spend most of my time writing my stories I send an old friend around to conventions to pose as my writer alter-ego. The Marv Wolfman who goes to conventions is a nice guy, doesn't cost me too much and takes my flak for me.

So now that you know the truth, please, if you see my Marv Wolfman guy at a convention, be good to him, say something nice, don't give him flak, and because I don't pay him too much, give him some money. He certainly deserves it.

Now Cat--back to *Fit to Print* and thank you for finally letting me get this very important information off my chest at long last.

Immediately following this astounding revelation, DC writer Mike W. Barr admitted that his real name was Fred Strong, brother to the infamous Brad!

As if this weren't enough, aardvark artist Dave Sim let the entire cat out of the bag when he confessed that his real name was Norbert Strong, father of Brad and Fred!!!

(And all this in one installment of "Fit to Print". Who says Cat Yronwode isn't on top of all the latest-breaking, earth-shaking news in the comics industry???)

Now sometime after this column saw print, I had occasion to write to Marv Wolfman, a.k.a. Brad Strong, to confirm the appearances he was scheduled to make at Comics & Comix last October. To the best of my memory, I ended the letter in jest with the following postscript:

By the way, Brad, whatever you do, please don't send that shlep Wolfman in your place. He's a nice enough guy and all, but there are several women in our organization ready to take on some of that "six foot eight, solid muscle and gorgeous as hell."

Shortly thereafter, I received the following



MARV WOLFMAN with Irving store manager DEAN LETO

Photo (C) Michael Caffrey

missive from "Brad", reprinted in its entirety below:

Through my correspondent, Mr. M. Wolfman, I have become aware of your missive of 19 August, 1983. Its tone is quite upsetting and I must make my position clear straightaway.

I, Bradley Strong, am a rather busy gentleman. My work scribing the adventures of colorful ladies and gentlemen whose life ambition is saving mankind from itself keeps me behind the keyboard for more than four hours each day. Polo, yacht racing, the dogs and, of course, the ladies, occupy the rest of my rather hectic personal schedule.

For that reason alone I have little time to fraternize with the adolescent populace who finds enjoyment in my rather innocuous four-color endeavors. Essentially what I am saying, my dear Ms. Schutz, is that I, Bradley Strong, never meet my public, for having once met them, many years ago, why would I ever want to even know their exist? Their place is in reading my work, must I also endure their physical presences as well?

To that end I have employed the many Msrs Marvin A. Wolfmans who tour the country in my 'name' attending comic book conventions where my Mr. Wolfmans may be crowded about by hungry, culture-starved children who have yet to learn that absolutely no four-color periodical can possibly hold one's attention like a well orchestrated cock fight. My Mr. Wolfmans are my sole public presence, thus your request, perhaps even demand, for my personal attention, must now and forever be denied.

Secondly, my Mr. Wolfmans are not, as you call them, "shlepps"--whatever that obviously ethnic word might mean. They are astute thespians, highly paid for their ability to hold conversations on subjects which they have absolutely no interest in. My Mr. Wolfmans have been instructed by me not to be as charming as I am, thus little scrutiny will be paid them and my life can continue unbothered by those of the age where facial markings are most prevalent.

As far as my Mr. Wolfmans' abilities in the area of relationships with the opposite sex, please be advised that I have personally instructed them on all my techniques gleaned in the Orient many years ago. The "several women in our organization" who were ready to meet me would do just as well creating a tryst with my employee. I, Bradley Strong, would find in that great pleasure without the risk of that dreaded social disease which I am certain all female four-color periodical readers must possess.

Once more, Ms. Schutz, please understand my position in this matter, and when my Mr. Wolfman attends your stores, please be instructed, along with your "several women in our organization," to show him every courtesy you would show me if I deigned to make a personal appearance in your "gay" city.

Sincerely,

Bradley Strong
BradStrong Enterprises
A division of
Brad Strong Industries

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This, dear readers, is just a sample of the typical shenanigans that occur daily in our sophisticated industry, presented here for your elucidation and enjoyment.

Oh, and before I forget, now that I've got your attention, let me say something that I've always wanted to tell people but never got around to. Did you know that my real name isn't Schutz? Or even Diana, for that matter? My real name is Godiva Peachtree. In real life, I'm six foot--uh, five foot eight, stacked to the hilt, and foxy as all get-out.

Believe me? Somehow I didn't think you would...



Photo courtesy Floyd Hicks

Will the real MARV WOLFMAN, uh, BRAD STRONG, please stand up?!

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GETTING normal WITH VALENTINO

Photo courtesy Valentino



VALENTINO in Normal Heights, CA

By the time these words see print, the first issue of Valentino's normalman should have hit the stands. Originally premiering as the back-up feature in CEREBUS #56 and #57, this limited run superhero parody will mark Aardvark-Vanaheim's first foray into the field of colour comics publishing and, with luck, will pave the way for future ventures into colour for this successful Canadian publishing house.

The normalman series also marks writer/artist Valentino's first major step into the mainstream comics market. A self-taught artist, Valentino's first published story, "The Mermaid", appeared in 1978 in the San Diego Comic Con booklet. Since that time, he has contributed extensively to both underground and newwave publications, most notably Clay Geerdes' CONIX WAVE. It was, in fact, that Berkeley-based digest-zine that provided the initial forum for the critically-acclaimed "In My Life", Valentino's tribute to the Beatles and, in particular, John Lennon. The story was later picked up by Aardvark-Vanaheim and printed as the second feature in CEREBUS #50, thereby precipitating a partnership that has now happily resulted in the publication of normalman.

The following interview was conducted by telephone last December, transcribed by Matthew Denn, copy-edited by Valentino, with final edits by yours truly.

Many thanks to Valentino for his support and for the considerable amount of time and effort he expended on this interview, as well as for this issue's "spirited" normalman cover. Special thanks, also, to Clay Geerdes without whose help this interview could not have been done in the first place.

-- Diana Schutz

DIANA: Tell me a little about your plans for normalman. As I understand it, each issue parodies different comics. For example, the first issue chronicles the origin of normalman, which is a take-off on Superman's origin. Where does the series go from there?

VALENTINO: The first issue doesn't really go over his origin. The first installment, which is in

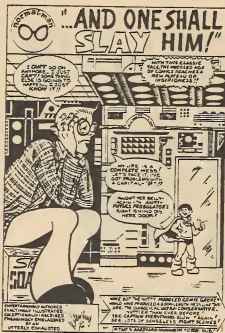
CEREBUS #56, has his origin in it, and that's sort of a Superman in reverse, as it were. In the first issue, we're going on to what's basically his first adventure, where he's battling the Ultra-Conservative and the Ultra-Conservative is trying to make him conform to the status quo of Levram [the planet normalman has landed on] by turning him into a superhero, and then we just go on from there. Where the series is going as a whole is: each issue, we'll parody, if not in content at least in style, a different comic book company. So the first issue is based on a Mort Weisinger DC, the second issue is based on very early Marvel, the third issue is EC, and the fourth issue is an ELQUEST [parody], and so on. As currently envisioned, no two issues will be alike. Where they're going in terms of characterization is sort of difficult to describe at this point without giving away our story. Over the course of the series we will see normalman's character change and grow: there are some real definite changes evident in issue #3 and in issue #4 as well, and where we go from there is on to his own self-actualization as an individual and, eventually, his fate.

DIANA: So basically then, what you're parodying is not so much particular superheroes, but more of a house style?

VALENTINO: Yes, that would be closer to it actually, but it's even more a pastiche than it is a general parody—a hodge-podge of various things. Some of the characters are being parodied: for instance, in the first couple issues, we have a group called the Fanatic Four, and it's pretty obvious where they come from. But then the second issue is based on a SPIDER-MAN comic book, but we don't have a Spider-Man parody in it.

DIANA: Although in the second issue normalman does sort of wax pessimistic, à la Peter Parker.

VALENTINO: Right, we go through that, which is the Marvel hero-with-problems schtick, but instead of doing like a "Spidey-Man" or something, I've tried to lay the book out like a Marvel comic. The first issue is laid out like a DC comic book, the third like an EC comic book, and so on. That's what I'm looking for: the basic feel of that company, as opposed to just re-writing somebody else's old story as they did in, say, NOT BRAND ECHH, where each



Splash from
normalman #2

(C) Valentino

story was a reworking of a more serious one.

DIANA: What are you using for reference? Do you have some kind of extensive collection of your own?

VALENTINO: Oh yeah. Plus I have several friends who own bookstores who have opened their inventory for me to supplement my own.

DIANA: You've been a comic book buff all your life, then?

VALENTINO: Yes, I got turned on to comic books probably when I was about two or three years old, by my father. He was into comic books, so I was more or less raised with them.

DIANA: Were you raised in Normal Heights, California?

VALENTINO: No, no. [Laughs] I just lived in Normal Heights for a little while when I moved to San Diego. I moved to San Diego in about 1977, and I moved there to get involved with the San Diego Comic Con because I figured it would be an easy way for me to break into the business. It didn't quite turn out that way, but that was my feeling at the time--what did I know?! I was born in the Bronx and I was raised all over the place. My father was a troubleshooter for the Chrysler corporation, so we would move... daily, almost! [Laughs] It was like a new town every other month. So I never really lived in any one place. Mostly in California--just up and down the coast, the Bay Area an awful lot and down here in Southern California an awful lot.

DIANA: I was curious as to the contribution that Normal Heights made to *normalman*.

VALENTINO: It just had such a great name: *Normal* Heights... I did this book around that time called *ALMOST NORMAL COMIX*, which was a collection of very early stuff in an underground vein, and it just seemed so *normal*; so *natural*, or *unnatural*, if you will, to me--it just seemed to fit real well. So "normalman" just works real nice when you offshoot it against...well, superheroes always have these wonderful names, like "The Fantastic Four". Could you see calling yourself "Mr. Fantastic"? [Laughs] So "normalman" seemed sort of nice. The name becomes somewhat of a parody in and of itself.

DIANA: You've done some work in underground and newwave comix, and it's not too often that an artist moves from there into the so-called "Big Leagues". How do you feel about working for a publisher like Aardvark-Vanaheim?

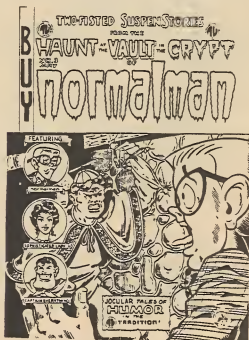
VALENTINO: Well, working for Aardvark-Vanaheim has been great for me. I've always been real ambitious about my work and there's been a progression that I see going up. Starting off with the newwaves, which is where I learned my licks and learned how to make my stuff presentable enough to sell to larger markets, and from there I went to undergrounds, and now from undergrounds I'm moving to the alternative publishers, and from here I don't know. I have plans to go into magazines, and eventually I would like to sell a syndicated newspaper strip. So for me it's an ever-expanding thing. I'm always looking to expand my audience further. But back to Aardvark-Vanaheim: it has been a really nice experience for me. Bill (Loeb) and Arn (Saba) and Deni (Sim) have just been really great--especially Deni. She's behind this book 100%, and she's gone out of her way to do almost everything she could and to answer so many questions of mine and stuff like that--she's just been really great. Working for them has been really great. It's been an easy transition for me, personally, with them. Her editorial policy just can't be beat, because the way she feels about it is that if she's accepted your book then she likes your stuff and she's not going to interfere at all, and she doesn't interfere with anything I want to do. It's all up to me, so the experience has just been wonderful.

DIANA: Would you ever consider working for a company like Marvel or DC?

VALENTINO: Sure, if it was the right thing. I know there's at least one series I would absolutely love to do for DC, maybe even two of them, whereas Marvel...I think I would have to hunt to find something that would fit me over there--they don't have a whole lot of humorous characters.

DIANA: Which two series at DC, out of curiosity?

VALENTINO: "The Bizarros" for one. [Laughter] I'd



(C) Valentino

love to do something new with the Bizarros. And the Inferior Five. I'd love to do them, too. So either one of those two, whereas with Marvel, I don't know, perhaps the Impossible Man, or a new NOT BRAND ECHH--they're always talking about reviving that.

DIANA: Ultimately then, you saw the newaves and the undergrounds primarily as a training ground for other things?

VALENTINO: Yeah. Newaves especially, undergrounds less so. Undergrounds are a market unto themselves, whereas newaves provide the inexperienced artist with a perfect opportunity to see his work in print, and I think it's only through seeing your work in print that you can improve your work and improve your style. It shows you what reproduces well and what doesn't, and it gives you some distance from your work so you're better able to evaluate your weaknesses. I think newaves are really good for that. They're good for people like me who want to move on and make a living at doing this, and they're good for people like Par Holman, for instance, who is just interested in doing it for his own personal amusement. So it has a double side to it that's real nice, and it's more than likely that I'll be doing a few things here and there for newave comix in the future. In fact, I'm going to be pencilling a new three-page story for the next issue of Brad Foster's FEVER PITCH, which he'll ink.

DIANA: That's good. I was going to ask if, now that you've moved into the "big time," you'd neglect your roots.

VALENTINO: No, no, no. What I've been doing for about the last year is mostly just pencilling covers and having friends of mine, whom I've always wanted to work with, ink them for me, and that cuts down on my time and I can do it. But I want to step aside as well. I want to lend my hand and show my support for the newaves, but at the same time I want to step aside and let some of the new people like Jim Williams...he comes to mind instantly. He's really good, and I think he deserves the same kind of shot that I had to see his work in print--to get it out there.

DIANA: To get back to *normalman*, you're doing everything on the book: you're pencilling, inking, lettering, and colouring. This is Ardvark-Vanahelm's first colour comic, and it's also your first colour comic. How's the colouring going?

VALENTINO: Ugh! [Laughter] It's really been a hassle. We've had an awful hard time trying to make it cost-effective and trying to figure out exactly how we're going to do it. There are several different colour processes, and we've been in touch with nearly everyone in the industry trying to figure out the best way to do it. We're going to use the gray line method, which is known as the "French" or the "Moebius" method or whatever you want to call it, and that's how we're going to be colouring it. But it's been a real headache for everybody involved thus far.

DIANA: So what does the gray line method involve in terms of what you have to do?

VALENTINO: The gray line method involves two different

printings of the page. One copy is printed in a very light gray line which does not reproduce, and you paint that--I'm using cel paints or vinyl acrylics, the paint used in animation cels. And then there's another copy which is printed in a black line, and those are the hard black lines. So you paint the gray line copy and then you overlay the black line copy, so your blacks come out really crisp and your colours just shine through it. It's the same method Moebius uses to colour his things.

DIANA: With regard to the series itself, is it a limited series, or will it have an indefinite run?

VALENTINO: It is definitely a limited series: it's limited right now to six issues. Now, if sales increase to a point where it's able to continue, then we'll continue for a while. It's not indefinite, though: it does have an ending.

DIANA: Yes, first of all there is only a finite number of publishers that you can parody, right?

VALENTINO: That's one of the problems, yes. Also, I too have fears of getting repetitive--doing the old superhero shtick every single issue.

DIANA: Well, that's what I was going to ask about really, because it struck me that that kind of parody could be a limited concept, in terms of exactly what you've just brought up. For example, when you've got gratuitous fight scenes or something--

VALENTINO: --how many times can you make that joke?

DIANA: Right. Without having it turn back into precisely the kind of thing that you're parodying.

VALENTINO: That's true if you're talking about an open-ended series,

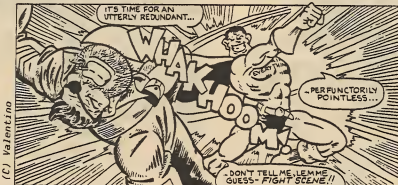
but I do have an ending for this series and if I can have my druthers with it, it will happen around issue #12, so two years' worth of the book is what I'm working toward. Then, regardless of anything, it will end. Plus, along with that, the companies that I'm choosing to parody don't necessarily have to be superhero companies. For instance, the EC issue. EC never did superheroes--and the ELFQUEST issue, again, it's not superheroes--so we can parody comics without necessarily parodying superheroes in every single issue. There's also the Spirit issue that I'm planning to do...

DIANA: How about a "Young normalman Romance"?

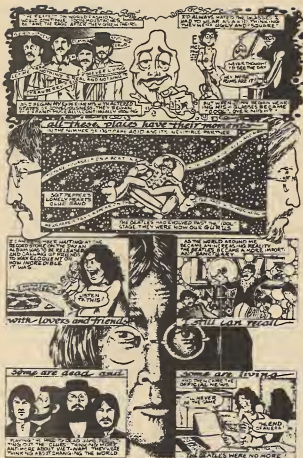
VALENTINO: Actually, I've been thinking about a romance book that I'd like to base on an Archie comic. Maybe "normalman's Pals 'n' Gals"--which also ties into the normalman's Pal Captain Everything (Jimmy Olsen) shtick in the first issue.

DIANA: In that context, are you worried about offending any of these publishers? Notice Denis Kitchen had to yank the Archie sequence out of the *Goodman Beaver* book. Has that crossed your mind at all--that you might be offending some of these people?

VALENTINO: Yes, sure it's a possibility. But, for instance, if we do the Archie book, there will be no Archie-type character in it--it will just be a general romance issue using an Archie-type logo. Be-



Captain Everything doing what he does best



Above left: A page from "In My Life", Valentino's tribute to John Lennon. Above right: The artist's contribution to the 1983 San Diego Comic Con program book.

...time marches on...



...no one is immune...

sides, it seems to me a real petty thing to get upset about. I think it depends on *how* you parody: for instance, Fred Hembeck's line of parody is usually readily accepted, even though sometimes he comes right out and says "Hey, this is garbage, kids!" It's accepted because of the tone that it's done in. *normalman* isn't vicious in its tone at all. It's done with a lot of love for the medium, and I think that comes through. But yeah, there's a problem with some people getting upset about it. There's always that possibility in satire. I can't let it hinder me, though.

DIANA: So you're not necessarily going to tone it down for those people?

VALENTINO: Well, I wouldn't per se. The ELFQUEST parody has given us a bit of grief already because the Pinis are pretty sensitive about their book. But I know Joe Staton's doing one.

DIANA: Oh yes. "Barfquest".

VALENTINO: Right, he's doing "Barfquest". We compared notes about a week ago. Mine's called "Crisis on Earth Twinkyn". [Laughter] And they're going to be different. He has his characters, and I can't remember what he calls them, but he has them riding sheepdogs, and mine are called the "smelfs" and they ride slugs! [Laughter] Even though both sets of characters will be essentially Smurfs in Elfquest drag, both Joe and I are confident the content and tone of the stories will be different from one an-

other. You can't really worry about offending people when you're doing parody. All you can say is that everything in here is done with satirical intent and the deepest affection and just hope that everybody can laugh at it and at themselves. I think it's a shame that so many people take themselves too seriously. I think we're in trouble when we come to the point where we're incapable of laughing at ourselves.

DIANA: What kind of a market do you see yourself working for with *normalman*?

VALENTINO: I don't know. It's very difficult for me to say. I think the first people that I'd really like to win over are the store-owners, because I think the store-owners are seeing so much of this stuff coming at them all the time--there's got to be something like 200 comic books being printed right now, the majority of which are superheroes. They've got to be coming under a sort of superhero overload. I think the fans that I'm really looking for are probably the older, more experienced fans--the ones who have been around for a long time, like myself. Even if they still read superhero comics, they understand that this is schlock, they understand the excesses involved. I don't think that I'm looking for the guys that are bitten by Marvel-itis: "I buy Marvels and only Marvels." I'm not going to attract those people anyway because all they want are guys in panties punching other guys in panties, and that's not what *normalman*'s about.

(C) Valentino

(C) Valentino

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Artist/Creator of
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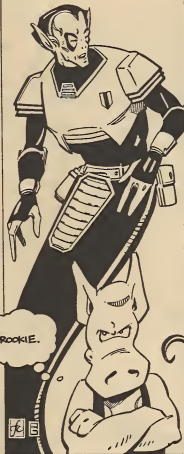
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DIANA: Well, you're giving them a little bit of that, but at the same time you're making fun of it.

VALENTINO: I'm making fun of it, that's the thing. It may attract them; I don't know. But I doubt it seriously. I think it will appeal to an older audience—not that there's anything in it that's of a more mature subject matter per se. It's "G" rated!

DIANA: So you're not really concerned, then, about that element of fandom which might resent your poking holes in their favourite characters?

VALENTINO: No, no, no, I'm not. It goes back to being too serious about our comics—these are funnybooks—they should be fun! And besides, I think it can be done in such a way that it wouldn't really offend them. I don't think they should be really worried about it. Hopefully they'll just look at it and laugh. I'm not trying to offend anyone, just having a little fun—there will be no personal attacks, it won't be virulent. I believe parody works best when it is done without viciousness, but when it's done with a genuine love of the subject. I have no ax to grind and I'm only parodying the books I myself enjoy. So, in a sense, I'm parodying myself. I think that comes through in the story. But again, it is satire, and some folks just take their comics too damn seriously, so...

DIANA: I haven't seen a whole lot of your earlier work, though of course I saw the John Lennon story (in CEREBUS #50) and the page that you did for the '83 San Diego Con booklet, neither of which was a humorous piece, and I'm wondering if humour is something like a new direction for you, or if that's always been what you've preferred to do.

WHAT'S THIS? MR. FANATICAL AND I HAVE BEEN AN ITEM FOR YEARS! I CAN'T BELIEVE HE'D THROW IT ALL AWAY...



...JUST FOR THE SAKE OF SOAR OPERA THEATRICKS.

(C) Valentino

...OR WOULD HE?? OH, WELL! SUCH IS LIFE IN A MERRY MIXED-UP MUDDLED COMIC! GUESS I'LL DO A TYPICALLY FEMALE THING NOW—LIKE GO DOWN TO THE BEAUTY SALOON AND GET A NEW HAIR-DO!



VALENTINO: It's predominantly what I've done, but it's not exclusively what I've done. For instance, I have an article in AMAZING HEROES #29 that is about the old DC imaginary tales, and it's not really a humorous article per se, although there are snippets of it there, but I'd say humour's been my predominant thing. But not exclusive, no. Sometimes I do "slice of life" autobiographical pieces, like the Lennon story ("In My Life").

DIANA: You don't find humour much harder to write than straight stories?

VALENTINO: No, I think humour comes easier for some people than it does for others. I think to write a book that's truly funny takes a lot of things: you have to research—for instance, if you're doing a parody, it takes a great deal of research in order to get the nuances down right. If you're doing a continuing character, then you not

only have to build your character and develop him, but you have to try to make him funny, so you're adding an extra element there. I can see where it could be harder for some people. It's not necessarily harder for me. A lot of it has to do with timing, too. I think the reason that a lot of so-called humour books of late have fallen flat on their faces is that they're not funny, and the reason that they're not funny is because the people that are writing them don't understand what timing is: they think humour is bad puns or pratfalls, and that's a part of it—but by no means is it all. I think when you look at the really good humour artists of the past, people like Harvey Kurtzman for instance, then you understand that one of his key elements in his stories was timing—how he paced things. I think that *normalman* is sort of a throwback to the old comic books when things were a bit less serious. I sincerely believe that *normalman* should be read while you're on the john—as opposed to people double-bagging it and sticking it in a vault somewhere to collect dust—and I want to return comic books back to that a bit. I want to make comic books that are fun to read, that will give you a smile, and make you feel good—comics that are meant to be read and re-read because every time you read them you find something new you didn't notice before. I'm tired of deadly serious "funnies" and, in that, I hope I'm not alone.

...DEFEAT US?...



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(C) Valentino

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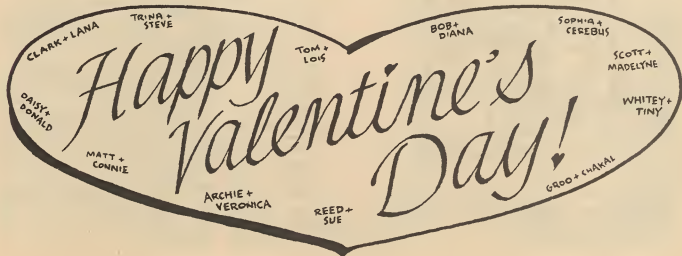
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In the tradition of AMAZING HEROES magazine, THE TELEGRAPH WIRE is pleased to present our first "silly cover," contributed by RON NORTON of Vancouver, British Columbia.







Dear John:

I just finished reading your latest "Eccentric Evolutions" in THE TELEGRAPH WIRE, and want to take a moment to congratulate you on an excellent newsletter. Diana is to be commended on an outstanding job, month in and month out yours is (to my mind) the best retailer publication I see.

The real reason for this note, however, is to state my agreement (with slight reservations) with your advice to consumers: "Don't buy reprints!" I wish you'd qualified that, because we feel our policy of limiting reprints (except for the digests) to one series, a single issue per month, and to books that aren't readily available (at a low price) to consumers, is not harmful to the market. In any case, however, your presentation was reasoned and balanced, unlike much of what one hears on the industry grapevine, and I commend you for it.

Sincerely,

Bruce Bristow
Marketing Director
DC Comics Inc.
New York, NY

Thanks for the kind words, Bruce. John Barrett's stand on reprints stimulated a lot of response. Read on...

Dear Staff:

I must take strong exception to John Barrett's recommendations in his "Eccentric Evolutions" column in THE TELEGRAPH WIRE #12.

Barrett advises comic readers in italic type: "Don't buy reprints!"

But he makes no distinction between the Marvel and DC reprints which are causing much of the well-known glut on comic shop shelves and the "reprint" titles that I publish. If Barrett convinces enough readers to boycott all reprints, then we can all kiss goodbye the chronological color reprints of Will Eisner's SPIRIT stories and the long overdue reprints of Milton Caniff's STEVE CANYON strips. Perhaps Barrett did not mean to lump our series in with the others, but one can't tell from his all-inclusive advice.

It is frankly difficult enough for a publisher my size to retain a decent market share against the onslaught of the giant publishers. Please don't exert your considerable influence to tighten the noose further.

Sincerely,

Denis Kitchen, Publisher
Kitchen Sink Press, Inc.
Princeton, WI

Denis, John didn't mean to lump either THE SPIRIT or STEVE CANYON in with the reprints that he was complaining about, as both those titles represent exceptions to his general rule. (God knows my own comic reading would be severely impoverished were neither THE SPIRIT nor STEVE CANYON available on today's market.) In any case, both you and Bruce Bristow will be interested to read John's column this issue and to note the amendments he has made to his general stance on reprints.

Dear Diana,

I read your editorial in THE TELEGRAPH WIRE #10, and I agree that the problem you describe does exist. However, I think that you are being overly optimistic if you think that an influx of women into the comic industry will cure it. It would seem that you do not read romance paperbacks. These are written mainly by women and sold almost exclusively to women. That Shanna/Ka-Zar plot which got you so upset is a very popular plot with the writers of these romances. Some of whom use it exclusively. Rape scenes are also very popular with their readers. And I mean rapes, not seductions. Probably all an influx of women into the industry will do is to lead to more comics containing these same elements.

Yours,

Andrew Zerbe
Birmingham, AL

You're quite right, Andrew: I don't read romance paperbacks (unless you want to count stuff like Lawrence's Women in Love or Robbins' Still Life With Woodpecker as "romance paperbacks") and I gather, by your comments, that I'm not missing much. I'm frankly appalled that rape is such a popular motif in these novels, though I should point out that many of these supposed women authors are, in fact, men writing under a female pseudonym. Though I'm not sure I agree with your last point--and certainly I hope it's not true--let me say that my concern is, simply, to bring more women into comics, from whatever vantage point (creator, reader, etc.), as I feel the industry could only benefit from a more well-rounded orientation, rather than its current one, which is almost entirely male-dominated. As a postscript, here's a quote on the subject from a letter by Mike Baron, writer of Capital's NEXUS and THE BADGER: "[The] comics [medium] doesn't need women writers. It needs writers, period. What it really needs is women readers. Readers don't care if the story was written and drawn by an orangutan after a sex-change operation--IT'S THE STORY THAT COUNTS, NOT THE STORY-TELLER." Amen.



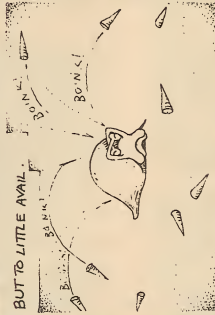
WHEN LAST WE SAW OUR HERO HIS SITUATION WAS LESS THAN ENVIABLE.



THE FRESHLY MUTATED ROSES SEEK RETALIATION AS ONLY THEY CAN

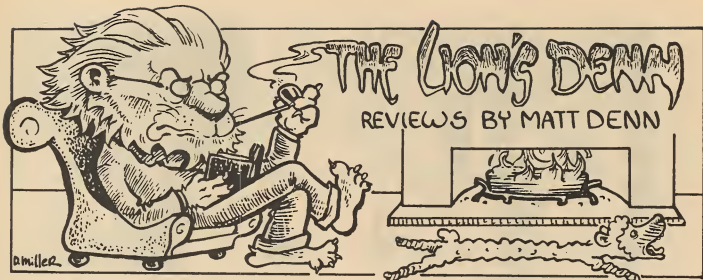


BUT TO LITTLE AVOID



MAX EMERGES TRIUMPHANT AND SATIATED...





MS. TREE

My opinion of detective stories is a rather unusual one: while I enjoy the stereotyped, too private detective personality (à la Philip Marlowe), I do not enjoy the stereotyped structure of detective novels, wherein the entire final chapter is dedicated to revealing supposedly shocking facts about the mystery, which the reader assumes has already been solved. Knowing in advance that there will be shocking facts revealed, however, negates the adjective "shocking," leaving only "facts." Lots of them. Boring ones. Contrived ones.

I had hoped that this aspect of detective novels would not be as much of a problem in Eclipse's MS. TREE, since the comic form tends to move faster than novels do. However, not only are writer Max Collins' conclusions to his first two Ms. Tree stories contrived, but they both have the same contrivance! In both stories, a character playing a specific stereotyped role turns out to be the criminal who is being sought by Ms. Tree. In the first story, which ran in ECLIPSE magazine for six issues, the ending was merely clichéd. In the second story in the first three MS. TREE comics, however, it was engaging!

The story in the color comics is in most respects weaker than the original was. I don't think that Terry Beatty's simple art works as well in color as in black and white, and furthermore, Collins' story seems to be unnecessarily convoluted. I assume that since Collins has had several detective novels of his own published, he has some knowledge of how to construct them, but I don't think any experienced paperback editor would have bought a text version of the story in MS. TREE #1-3. Further, in #4 and #5, the story seems to have lost any focus that it once had--and as for the cover of #5, I am astonished that Eclipse would resort to the exploitative tactics of Americomics in featuring a partially-clad Ms. Tree being held at gunpoint.

"The Scythe," written by Dean Mullaney and drawn by Ellis Goodson and SABRE inker Bruce Miller, is a relatively standard costumed hero strip, with a large cast of characters that is sometimes confusing because of the artists' difficulty with drawing faces. The story is less confused than MS. TREE, but no matter how poor his storyline may be, Collins is still an excellent scripter, while Mullaney has very little experience in the field of comic writing. The art is not much help either since, aside from a couple of interesting panels, it is either boring or baffling.

My final complaint about MS. TREE is its format (or lack thereof): a chapter of Ms. Tree, letters page, Mike Mist Minute Mystery, part of "The Scythe," Famous Detective Pin-Up, more of "The Scythe," and finally a last chapter of Ms. Tree. There must be a better way.

I want MS. TREE to succeed. It is an admirable effort to do something different, and I support any efforts by comic creators to try good, new things. For a book like MS. TREE to survive in the superhero marketplace, though, it has to be even better than good--it has to be exceptional. If Collins can return to his ECLIPSE magazine form, it could very well make that mark. If he continues the way he's going, I don't think the book will last another year.

MARVEL SUPER HEROES SECRET WARS #1

I'm not too proud to admit my mistakes. When I first read the ads for MARVEL SUPER HEROES SECRET WARS, I was sure that the book would be pretentious, plodding, irrelevant, and plastic.

I was wrong. It's worse. In a fashion that would make even LEGION writer Paul Levitz blanch, writer Jim Shooter has attempted to jam literally scores of comic book characters into a single 32-page comic, resulting in classic panels of dialogue such as the following:

"I suggest that first we find out something easier--like who all is here! I'll start! Everybody knows us, because we're The Mighty Avengers, and we're famous! But, just in case, I'm The Wasp, and with me are the She-Hulk, Captain Marvel, Captain America, Thor, Hawkeye, and Iron Man, who's really on leave, but is with us anyway!"

"I am Professor X. These are my X-Men--Storm, Nightcrawler, Rogue, Cyclops, Wolverine, and Colossus!"

"And Lockheed the Dragon!"

"I, of course, am The Hulk!"

"Your friendly neighborhood Spider-Man at your service!" (Yes, we're still on the same panel here.)

"We're The Fantastic Four minus Sue!--The Invisible Girl to you! Stretcho calls himself Mister Fantastic if you can believe that! This crumb's The Human Torch...and I'm the Easter Bunny!"

Jim Shooter has the incessantly annoying habit of ending every line of dialogue with an exclamation point, and as for the dialogue itself, I dearly hope that up-and-coming comic book writers do not take Shooter as a role model. The characters' speech

patterns add new meaning to the word "stilted."

Shooter's plot is juvenile. Having written Galactus into the ground, Marvel had to find a character who could kick in even Galactus' teeth. Hence, The Beyonder. Using a plotline that reeks of the CONTEST OF CHAMPIONS series, Shooter has set the stage to have an army of superheroes battle an army of super-villains for the next eleven issues. I don't know about you, but that just sets my blood on fire.

The artwork is straight out of MARVEL UNIVERSE. Zeck and Beatty provide clean but unexciting renditions of all the Marvel characters, with the only exception being their immense version of Captain America (the only character, incidentally, treated with any subtlety by Shooter).

Had Shooter simply introduced the heroes over several issues, many of this book's problems could have been avoided. As it now stands though, the book will probably alienate many of Marvel's long-time readers while still baffling new ones. I sometimes wonder if I should collect comics like this so that I won't be so tempted to read comics rather than do my homework.

THRILLER

I am sick and tired of reading insulting reviews of THRILLER. Fan columnists hate THRILLER. Members of opposing companies hate THRILLER. Half of my comic reading friends hate THRILLER. Agreed, THRILLER is often difficult to follow, and it will be impossible for a new reader to follow it--but this in and of itself is not cause to attack the book. I wonder what the fan reviewers who ridicule this book think of James Joyce, Stanley Kubrick, and Pablo Picasso. Just as one would not expect someone just learning to speak English to read *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, one would not expect someone new to comics to comprehend THRILLER. If the comic industry is to continue to diversify, I think it must move away from the asinine theory that everything must appeal to everyone.

I find THRILLER's approach refreshing. For once, I have to concentrate on what I am reading, and I almost inevitably find the end product satisfying. Robert Loren Fleming's eclectic stories and characters mesh perfectly with Trevor Von Eeden's manic storytelling.

For those who have absolutely no idea what THRILLER is, it is a well-disguised superhero book in that the super-powered characters do not wear costumes and spend very little time doing any fighting. The characters are all bizarre, with the exception of one continuing normal character who is just as baffled by everything for a while as the reader is. It is through Daniel Grove's revelations that the reader finally learns what is going on. This alone is in contrast to the majority of the comics currently being produced, where the information would be related in bloated captions.

Not only is Von Eeden's storytelling uniquely quirky and, for the most part, clear, but I find his rendering appealing as well. The last two issues, which were inked by Dick Giordano, were equally eye-catching.

In all, THRILLER is one of the most innovative and entertaining comics around--something which can also be said of the rest of DC's new "adult line": NATHANIEL DUSK, CAMELOT 3000, and RONIN. Whereas its main competitor heralds its innovation with a twelve-issue maxi-series featuring armies of battling superheroes, DC is putting its head on the chopping block in an effort to produce top-rate material.

SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING

DC strikes again. After acquiring English comic writer Alan Moore, SWAMP THING has become the finest "mainstream" title produced by either Marvel or DC.

Alan Moore took over the reins on the book from Marty Pasko, and to be quite frank, anything he did would have been something of an improvement over the abysmal stories Pasko turned out. However, Moore has not only revamped the book, but he has completely rewritten the character's origin in a most imaginative way. His scripting is some of the tightest and most effective in comics. A dinner table scene in a recent Moore issue marked the first time I had ever been "horrified" by a horror comic.

The art by Steve Bissette and John Totleben is equally impressive. Bissette combines design and dramatic storytelling beautifully, and as I don't know how Bissette and inker Totleben work together, I will credit them both with the gorgeous rendering that the book features. Tom Yeates' lifework is nothing to sneeze at, but Bissette and Totleben quite simply blow him out of the water.

The DC renaissance is under way, and SWAMP THING is leading the newsstand pack. I am not accustomed to giving unabashed praise to books, but SWAMP THING by Moore, Bissette, and Totleben comes surprisingly close to equalling the classic issues by Wein and Wrightson.

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ON THE REVIVAL OF OTTO MESSMER'S FELIX THE CAT

Otto Messmer is dead. He died October 28, 1983, at the age of 91. Like most of the cartoonist-animators of his time, he spent most of his life working anonymously, seeing his ideas and artwork signed by someone else. Messmer was to Pat Sullivan what men like Ub Iwerks, Floyd Gottfredson, and Carl Barks were to Walt Disney--the pen behind the throne. In the case of FELIX THE CAT, Sullivan had nothing to do with the creation of the character and very little to do with the ideas which appeared in the cartoons and strips. KRAZY KAT was the hot strip at the time, so Messmer borrowed him, restyled him slightly, did a quick treatment, and showed the rough to Sullivan. Like most animated characters, this first Felix was later streamlined and influenced Ub Iwerks when he was working out Mickey Mouse for the earliest Disney mouse cartoons circa 1925. The best source of information about this period and the Sullivan studio is Leonard Maltin's *Of Mice and Magic* (New York: Signet, 1980). Messmer and Sullivan met at Universal Studio in Fort Lee, New Jersey. They worked together until Sullivan's death in February of 1933. The first Felix cartoon was FELINE FOLLIES (1919), but the cat was not officially named until the second, MUSICAL MEWS. Paramount producer, John King, named Felix, enjoying "the contrast of 'felix' for felicity, with the traditional superstition about black cats" (Maltin, p. 23).

Now comic research is sloppy and replete with error, and I think one reason for this is those doing it still have a subliminal reservation about the validity of the medium they are studying. The published comments about Felix the Cat are significant. "The first Felix page that appears in the *American* on March 8, 1931, gives a clue to Felix's practical abilities and a hint of the gay humor with which it has consistently entertained its readers" (Coulton Waugh, *The Comics*, 1947, p. 155). In *The Comics* in 1974, Jerry Robinson wrote: "Felix the Cat was originated by Pat Sullivan in 1931 and later continued by Otto Messmer." Both Waugh and Robinson worked for King Features Syndicate and they must have known better than that; they just didn't look Felix up. They must have known Messmer was drawing the strip, too, yet neither mentions him. Maurice Horn mentioned in his *World Encyclopedia of Comics* (1976) that "Australian cartoonist Pat Sullivan created the character FELIX THE CAT in an animated cartoon produced in 1917" (p. 246). That's enlightening.

According to Leonard Maltin, "Felix did not survive the transition to sound. Pat Sullivan was unimpressed with the possibilities of talking pictures and didn't want to invest time or money to make the changeover. As a result, Felix declined in popularity and within a year was obsolete" (Maltin, p. 26). Well, Felix was made with sound, but not for that historic television broadcast. The sound cartoons were made at the Van Bueren Studio in 1935, but they were not successful and the character was dropped.

In a note in *The Smithsonian Collection of Newspaper Comics*, Bill Blackbeard wrote, "Felix the Cat began as an animated cartoon, the work of Australian-born Pat Sullivan, and moved to the comics in 1923. The strip was ghosted by several hands, Otto Messmer being the most frequently mentioned and talented candidate" (p. 329). Horn stated: "FELIX THE CAT made its debut as a Sunday page on August 14, 1923, and a daily strip followed on May 9, 1927" (p. 246). Horn passes along a rumor that Bill Holman ghosted the strip from 1932 to '35, but gives no evidence.

What I mean by inaccuracy in a lot of this writing is the failure to distinguish clearly between cartoon, strip, Sunday page, comic book, etc. When Waugh talks about that first Felix page in the *American* on March 8, 1931, is he talking about the first one ever to appear or the first one to appear in 1931? Who knows? He doesn't say. Notes in the *Smithsonian Collection* attribute the comic strip to Messmer, but erroneously attribute the cartoons to Sullivan. Maltin quotes Messmer: "I wrote and animated it alone with studio assistants. It grew in popularity, and as the demand became more urgent, Sullivan took on more animators, at various times, to help" (Maltin, p. 23).

Interestingly that Maltin says Sullivan found Felix to be "more popular in England than in the United States" yet *The Penguin Book of Comics*, a British work by George Perry and Alan Aldridge (1967, rev. 1971), does not mention Felix at all. Likely Felix was considered simply an imitation of Krazy Kat and ignored accordingly.

Messmer's formula, according to Maltin, was to emphasize personality in Felix, to move in and focus upon eye motion and facial expression, to start each cartoon with a theme that would develop the interest of the audience. Messmer left animation when the Sullivan Studio closed. He did some work for Famous Studios in the mid-1940s, but spent most of his time working for the Douglas Leigh Corporation in New York, designing animation for their electronic billboard which oversees Times Square. His work was recognized at Montreal's EXPO '67.

Felix, the lonely cat in search of a home, the exile from Rudyard Kipling, the shadow of Krazy Kat, finally found his place the last couple of years. The recent revival has resulted in books and T-shirts and buttons and hats and caps--no one can call him an also-ran anymore.

Otto Messmer's anonymity continues, however. Neither *The Comic Adventures of Felix the Cat* (Determined Productions, San Francisco, 1983), nor the paperback *Felix the Cat*, published by Tom Doherty Associates in 1981, mentions Messmer.

They don't even mention Pat Sullivan.

COMIX WAVE is a registered trademark of Clay Geerdes. 1984, all rights reserved. Used here by permission. Check out the latest issue of COMIX WAVE (#16), with photo-cover and art by David Miller and Susan Catherine. Available for \$1.54 pp. from Clay Geerdes, P.O.B. 7081, Berkeley, CA, 94707.

NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND

BY
DI SCREAMING

Surfacing, once again, with a potpourri of news and notes from down under...

Despite rumours of an early death, the underground has miraculously survived into 1984. Ringing in the new year is the latest issue of DR. WIRTHAM'S COMICS & STORIES, another double issue #7/8, featuring a strong line-up of contributors including Jay Kinney, Terry Beatty, Robert Williams, Joe Zabel, Greg Budgett and Gary Dumm, among many others. Priced at \$2.50 and worth every penny!

Another new title for '84 is the self-published PSYCOMIX, by Jeff Huch and Mike Ripple. A magazine-size black-and-white, PSYCOMIX is available from Jeff and Mike for \$2.50 plus postage (about 80¢) at P.O. Box 8121, Santa Cruz, CA, 95061.

Still going strong from late '83 is Rip Off's FAT FREDDY'S COMICS & STORIES #1, starring our favourite Fabulous Furry Freak Brother as the hero of a succession of classic comic book tales (with a twist), rendered by Gilbert Shelton and Paul Mavrides, as well as Hal Robins, Spain Rodriguez, Jack Jackson, Ted Richards, Guy Colwell, and S. Clay Wilson—all for a mere \$1.50!

GAY COMIX #4 also showed up just before Christmas—another quality issue with contributions from Vaughn Frick, Lee Marrs, Roberta Gregory, Kurt Erichsen, Rick Campbell, and more. This is the last issue edited by Howard Cruse, though he will continue to participate in future issues. The book's new editor, San Francisco's own Robert Triptow, plans to shift the focus of the title towards a sharper emphasis on humour. He also hopes to firm up the book's scheduling and to have it out on a regular basis, twice a year.

GAY #5, due this summer, will feature stories by Cruse and Triptow, Lee Marrs, Jerry Mills, Cheela Smith, Michael Goldberg, Patrick Marcel, and Vaughn Frick, with a cover by T.O. Sylvester.

Also coming up from under is WEIRD0 #9, currently at press, and a re-release of Crumb's OESPAIRA, now being published by Last Gasp.

Not Quite Undergrounds But You Should Know About These Anyway Department:

Yes, I'm biased, but I couldn't pass up a copy of THE BEST OF LITTLE DIANA, a black-and-white compilation of strips which originally appeared in the UCLA Daily Bruin and Satyr, UCLA's humour magazine. Written and drawn by Michael Lipman, little Diana is a definite product of the '80s, a hip young "broad" in dark glasses who delivers her hilarious caustic commentary on life with the deadly impact of a 357 Magnum. Available for \$1.75 plus about 50¢ postage from either Lipman himself at 308 Westwood Plaza, Los Angeles, CA, 90024, or from

the **MARILYN**
File



(C) Terry Beatty



(C) Bob Laughlin



Zabel's "White Feather" from DR. WIRTHAM'S #7/8



From GAY #4

(C) Jerry Mills

(C) Joe Zabel

UNDERGROUNDS ARE NOT DEAD!



Under the impression that "underground" comics are dead? Don't you believe it! Two new titles are out from Kitchen Sink Press in December and a blockbuster color mini-series in spring!

DOPE COMIX No.5... Terrific cover by Charles (Raw) Burns high-lites this all-marijuana issue. Plus: Steve Stiles, an "Omaha" story by Reed Waller, Chris Browne (son of Dick), Monte Wolverton (son of Basil), Sharon Rudahl, Gary (Phoebel) Whitney & more! \$1.75.

GAY COMIX No.4... powerful AIDS story by Howard Cruse, Vaughn Frick cover, Lee Marrs, Kurt Erichsen, Joe Sinardi & Roberta Gregory, 44 pgs. \$2.

Harold Hedd starring in **HITLER'S COCAINE**...coming in spring! Baxter paper/full color adventure story from ultra-talented Rand Holmes. Watch future ads for 1st issue's release date.



Color Spirit Comic Book!



The Spirit is now a full-color Baxter paper comic! For the first time ever the classic Will Eisner stories are reprinted in chronological order. And what classics they are! No.2 is on sale in mid-December. It has better color than ever! The originals (if you find them) would cost \$120+.

Will EISNER'S QUARTERLY 1

What a package! The first issue of Will Eisner's Quarterly starts off with a brand new 33-page story, "Life Force," (a sequel to the universally acclaimed graphic novel, *A Contract With God*. Eisner proves again with this powerful story that he is at the height of his powers. Also featured is a long interview with Neal Adams—illustrated by many never-before-published examples of Adams' art. Finally—a 16 page color section which reprints a very early Spirit story plus a Bob Powell Mr. Mystic—both from 1940! Add a new Eisner cover painting...all for just \$2.95.



HARVEY KURTZMAN & WILL ELDER GOODMAN BEAVER

The long-awaited Goodman Beaver collection, originally announced for November publication, ran into some legal snags and will not be available before Christmas. However, it is at press and will be out soon after Xmas.

The Goodman Beaver book features four complete classic stories by Harvey Kurtzman and Will Elder plus a lengthy illustrated introduction by Dave Schreiner providing background information, commentary by Elder & Kurtzman and a synopsis of the ill-fated "Goodman Goes Playboy" story which cannot be included in this volume. A deluxe hardcover edition is available, featuring a color dustjacket, sewn binding and a special plate drawn for this edition and autographed by both Kurtzman and Elder. Limited to 1250 copies: \$25.

Quality paperback edition is also available at \$9.95.



ALL OF THESE ITEMS ARE AVAILABLE FROM YOUR REGULAR COMICS & COMIX OUTLET. RESERVE YOURS TODAY!

LITTLE DIANA



(C) Michael Lipman

HI DE HO COMICS & FANTASY, 525 Santa Monica Blvd., Santa Monica, CA, 90401.

Another recent non-mainstream release is the fifth volume of *Kitz 'n' Katz: ZOOPEKATS*. Artist Bob Laughlin serves up more fresh and funny strips featuring his slightly confused (but always lovable) katz. Only \$2 pp., *Kitz 'n' Katz #5* is available from Bob at 315 Clifton Street, Westfield, NJ, 07090.

Thanks to Ron Norton of Vancouver's COMICSHOP, I was recently treated to a secret preview of the first 10 pages of HEARTBREAK COMICS, by REIO FLEMING artist David Boswell. Originally scheduled for Valentine's Day release, the book is now slated to appear either this spring or summer. Starring Laszlo, Great Slavic Lover, with special guest Reid Fleming, HEARTBREAK promises to be every bit as successful as Boswell's first ground-breaking effort. Preview panels next issue, with luck...

Local artists in the limelight include Zippy creator Bill Griffith who gives writer Bruce Sweeney a rare interview in the current issue of COMICS INTERVIEW.

The May issue of THE COMICS JOURNAL will feature a Gilbert Shelton cover as well as an interview with Shelton and Fred Todd, Vice-President and President, respectively, of Rip Off Press.

The art of Guy Colwell, perhaps best known for his work on INNER CITY ROMANCE, will be on display throughout most of February and early March. Open week-ends 1-6 p.m. or weekdays by appointment, this serial exhibit will take place at 1444 Guerrero in San Francisco. The week-end of February 11th and 12th, and again on February 18th and 19th, Colwell's portraits will be featured, including formal portraits, self-portraits, street scenes, and new oil paintings. On February 25th and 26th, Colwell's ink and pencil drawings will be exhibited, including his "Bomb Series", depicting eight stages of a nuclear explosion. Finally, on March 3rd and 4th, the exhibit will focus on Colwell's nude and erotic artwork. For more information, call (415) 824-1346.

THE FUNNIE'S PAPER is a thick xeroxine "devoted to collectors, enthusiasts, historians, and students of the comic strip as an American art form," and fun besides! Edited by Donald Cook, the zine is already on its eighth issue and features articles and information on comic strips, new and old. Only \$5 for a one-year subscription (9 issues), THE FUNNIE'S PAPER is available from Don at 2080 McGregor Blvd., Ft. Myers, FL, 33901.

Newave artist Steve Fiorilla can currently be found hard at work on YUCSNUC, a xeroxine for media junkies everywhere. The majority of the zine consists of reviews--tv reviews, movie reviews, comic reviews, book reviews, and review reviews! No subscription info available, but you're best to send at least \$1 to YUCSNUC, 69 Trimont Avenue, Waltham, MA, 02134.



(C) Bob Laughlin

Lipman's "Little Diana" in fine form. Notice the resemblance to a certain hard-nosed editor!

LITTLE DIANA



(C) Michael Lipman



(C) Jeff Huch

Superhero parody with Captain Zoxy in PSYCOMIX

Zooperkats learn it was just a dream after all

COMICS & COMIX CALENDAR



JIM SHOOTER

Photo courtesy Marvel Comics Group

THE COMIC EVENT OF THE YEAR!

Jim Shooter, the Vice-President and Editor-in-Chief of Marvel Comics, will be appearing exclusively for Comics & Comix to talk about the new SECRET WARS mega-series.

TIMES:

Saturday, March 3
Noon - 2 p.m.

Saturday, March 3
5-8 p.m.

Sunday, March 4
Noon - 3 p.m.

PLACES:

515 Cowper
Palo Alto

2461 Telegraph
Berkeley

6135 Sunrise
Citrus Heights

Sunday, February 19

Join us for some great deals and a good time besides at our NO MINIMUM BID AUCTION in Berkeley, starting at 4 p.m.

Saturday, February 25

More great deals as we discount our collectable comics at 30% OFF, all day in the Berkeley store.

And at our Sacramento store, starting at 2 p.m., the final judging will take place in our current MODEL BUILDING CONTEST, with a \$50 C&C gift certificate to be awarded as the grand prize. All entries will be accepted and displayed from February 18th 'til the 25th.

Sunday, February 26

SF authors PAUL EDWIN ZIMMER and OIANA PAXSON will be appearing at our Sacramento store for an autograph party, 3-5 p.m.

Wednesday, February 29

LEAP YEAR SALE: 29% off *everything*, all stores, all day!

Saturday, March 3

As noted above, Editor-in-Chief of Marvel Comics, JIM SHOOTER, will be appearing in our Palo Alto shop for the first of his three Bay Area appearances, noon to 2 p.m.

Later, you can find Marvel's head honcho signing autographs at the Berkeley store, 5-8 p.m.

Sunday, March 4

JIM SHOOTER again, this time at the Citrus Heights store, noon 'til 3 p.m.

Saturday, March 10

Great savings for all customers with the WHEEL OF FORTUNE: you spin your own discount! All day, all merchandise, at our Solano Mall store in Fairfield.

Friday, March 30

Meet ARCHIE GOODWIN, respected editor of Marvel's Epic line of comics, at our Irving Street location, 5-7 p.m.

Saturday, March 31

CREATION CONVENTION comes back to the Bay Area at San Francisco's Holiday Inn Golden Gateway, 1500 Van Ness. Guests include ARCHIE GOODWIN, FRANK CIROCCO, *Star Trek* actress BIBI BESCH, and (tentatively) X-MEN co-creator DAVE COCKRUM. 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Sunday, April 1

CREATION CON again, with ARCHIE GOODWIN, FRANK CIROCCO, tentative guest DAVE COCKRUM, actress BIBI BESCH, and many more. The convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Golden Gateway in San Francisco, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Saturday, April 7

CREATION ANAHEIM at the fabulous Oisneyland Hotel, with guests JIM SHOOTER, JOHN ROMITA JR., and BUTCH GUICE, all of Marvel Comics. 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Sunday, April 8

ANAHEIM CREATION continues with JIM SHOOTER, BUTCH GUICE, and X-MEN penciller JOHN ROMITA JR. At the Oisneyland Hotel, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

For more information concerning upcoming promotional events at Comics & Comix, don't forget to pick up the telephone and call the new Comics & Comix Hot-Line. For Sacramento-area customers, the Hot-Line number is: 916-969-KOMX. Bay Area customers can dial 415-644-8377. The Hot-Line's taped message will be updated weekly on Fridays, so you can be sure to get the latest up-to-date news.

Comics & Comix March Specials!

All coupons may be redeemed at Comics & Comix from March 1, 1984 through March 31, 1984. Coupons apply only to merchandise specified at full retail price and are limited to one per customer per store.

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| 20% OFF ANY PURCHASE OF PACIFIC COMICS VALID 3/1/84-3/31/84 | 20% OFF All FANTAGRAPHICS PUBLICATIONS VALID 3/1/84-3/31/84 | 20% OFF ANY PURCHASE OF FIRST COMICS VALID 3/1/84-3/31/84 |
| 20% OFF All KITCHEN SINK PUBLICATIONS VALID 3/1/84-3/31/84 | 20% OFF All MARVEL GRAPHIC NOVELS VALID 3/1/84-3/31/84 | 20% OFF Aardvark-Vanaheim PUBLICATIONS VALID 3/1/84-3/31/84 |
| 20% OFF ANY PURCHASE OF SF POCKETBOOKS VALID 3/1/84-3/31/84 | 25% OFF ALL ART PORTFOLIOS VALID 3/1/84-3/31/84 | 20% OFF ANY PURCHASE OF BACK ISSUE COMICS VALID 3/1/84-3/31/84 |

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MARVEL over the First GROO Story, begun in 1977 and completed in 1984.
CUT-OUT and Display the GROO Cut Outs.
GAG over the Cheese Dip.



Telegraph Wire # 13 (1984)

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